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(54) **articulated stent with links having kinks**

mit einem geknickten Gelenkmechanismus ausgestatteter Stent
extenseur articulé avec des liaisons coudées

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Description

FIELD AND BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to stents which are implanted as part of a balloon angioplasty procedure within a bodily conduit of a living animal or a human to maintain patency. In particular, the present invention relates to articulated intravascular stents for delivery through or implantation in a blood vessel having a curved portion.

[0002] Intravascular stents having a constricted diameter for delivery through a blood vessel and an expanded diameter for applying a radially outwardly extending force for supporting the blood vessel are known in the art. Articulated intravascular stents for either delivery through a curved blood vessel or implanted therein are also known in the art.

[0003] Balloon-expandable stents are commercially available under the trade name Palmaz-Schatz Balloon-Expandable Stents from Johnson & Johnson Intervention Systems Co. The balloon-expandable stent described in EP-A-0 606 165 comprises a hollow tube, open at both stent ends and having a series of slots therein. The ends of the slots are rounded so as to provide smooth surfaces obviating the abrading of body passageways. However, this stent has the drawback that it shrinks significantly during expansion.

[0004] Self-expandable articulated stents are described, for example, in U.S. Patent No. 5,104,404 entitled "Articulated Stent" to Wolff. A prior art self-expandable articulated intravascular stent **10** deployed in a curved blood vessel **16** is now described with reference to Figure 1 which is, in actual fact, Figure 2 of the above referenced U.S. Patent No. 5,104,404. Stent **10** is made up of a number of individual segments **12** articulated by hinges **14** connected at each end to segments **12**. Stent **10** is preferably fabricated from memory shape material, for example, nitinol, and as such is self expandable after delivery from a delivery system described in U.S. Patent No. 4,830,003 to Wolff et al. However, these prior art articulated intravascular stents suffer from a number of disadvantages both during delivery through a curved blood vessel and when implanted therein as will now be described.

[0005] The delivery of stent **10** through curved blood vessel **16** is more complicated than the delivery of a non-articulated stent in that stent **10** has to be angularly oriented such that its hinges **14** are located towards the convex portion of blood vessel **16** so that stent **10** can be flexed inward. In the present example, it will be noted that hinges **14** are located on the same side of segments **12** because blood vessel **16** has only a simple curve in one plane. It can be readily appreciated that delivery of stents through blood vessels which have one or more curved portions which are not in the same plane is even more complicated and generally requires specially constructed stents.

[0006] Even when implanted in a curved blood vessel **16**, stents **10** are shown to be lacking in that the gaps between segments **12** render the curved portion of blood vessel **16** without support. Furthermore, the gaps at the convex portion of blood vessel **16** are substantially greater than the gaps at the concave portion thereof, thereby inducing non-uniform and therefore undesirable stresses on blood vessel **16**.

[0007] Therefore, it would be highly desirable to have an articulated stent which does not require any particular angular orientation when being delivered through a curved bodily conduit and provides continuous and uniform support for both straight and curved portions of a bodily conduit when implanted.

[0008] It would also be highly desirable the structure of a stent does not depend on the particular orientations of curved portions of a blood vessel.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] The object of the present invention is for an articulated stent which can be delivered through a curved bodily conduit using a routine medical procedure and a conventional stent delivery system. Furthermore, the stent provides continuous and uniform support for both straight and curved portions of a bodily conduit when implanted. Still further, the structure of a stent and its support of a bodily conduit do not depend on the orientations of the curved portions of the conduit.

[0010] The objective of the present invention is achieved by an articulated stent, comprising: (a) at least two substantially rigid segments; and (b) a flexible connector for connecting adjacent segments, wherein the connector assumes a substantially cylindrical configuration when relaxed and a differentially stretched and compressed curved configuration when flexed.

[0011] After expansion, the rigid segments of the stent preferably present a fine diamond shaped mesh having 1 mm long sides to provide continuous and uniform support for straight portions of a bodily conduit.

[0012] The connectors are implemented as links each having at least one kink. The connectors typically have between 8-24 links to provide continuous and uniform support for both straight and curved portions of a bodily conduit.

[0013] The stents have constricted diameters for intraluminal delivery and are then deformed, by the inflation of a balloon forming part of their catheter delivery system, to expanded diameters for applying radially outwardly extending forces for supporting the lumen of bodily conduits. The constricted and expanded diameters of the stents typically fall in the ranges of 1.0-3.5 mm and 3.5-10.0 mm, respectively.

[0014] The stents are preferably fabricated from low memory, more plastic than elastic, bio-compatible materials, for example, stainless steel 316L, gold, tantalum, etc. which enables them to be plastically deformed from their constricted diameters to their expanded diameters.

[0015] A typical stent for implantation in a human coronary artery is 9-21 mm long comprising three to seven 2.2 mm long stent segments connected by two to six 1 mm long connectors such that the ends of the stent subtend between a 45° to 135° angle at a radius of curvature of approximately 9 mm when flexed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0016] The invention is herein described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 shows a close-up view of a prior art articulated stent of deployed in a curved blood vessel;
FIGS. 2a and 2b show an articulated stent not covered by the present invention but useful for illustrative purposes in its relaxed and flexed states before plastic deformation;

FIG. 2c shows the expanded stent of Figure 2 after plastic deformation;

FIG. 2d shows the stent of Figure 2 mounted on a catheter in its flexed state;

FIGS. 2e and 2f show the stent of Figure 2 before and after expansion by a balloon forming part of its catheter delivery system;

FIGS. 3a and 3b show a preferred embodiment of an articulated stent, constructed and operative according to the teachings of the present invention, in its relaxed and flexed states before plastic deformation; and

FIG. 3c shows the expanded stent of Figure 3 after plastic deformation.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0017] The present invention is of an articulated stent for delivering through a curved bodily conduit, for example, a peripheral or coronary artery of a living animal or a human and implantation therein as part of a balloon angioplasty procedure to maintain patency.

[0018] The principles and operation of the articulated stent of the present invention may be better understood with reference to the drawings and the accompanying description.

[0019] Referring now to the drawings, Figures 2a-2c show an articulated stent not covered by the present invention but useful for illustrative purposes generally designated 100, generally comprising a number of substantially rigid segments 102 connected by connectors 110.

[0020] Segments 102 are preferably made up to present a fine diamond mesh of interconnected diamond shaped cells 108 having 1 mm sides on expansion as best seen in Figure 2c. Depending on the intended diameter of stent 100, segments 102 typically comprise between 8-24 diamond shaped cells 108.

[0021] Connectors 110 comprise links 112 connecting a front end 104 to a tail end 106 of adjacent segments 102. Links 112 preferably extend in a substantially helical fashion between apices of diamond shaped cells 108 at front and rear ends 104 and 106 of adjacent segments 102 such that the number of links 112 equals the number of cells 108. Links 112 are preferably evenly deployed around perimeters of segments 102 such that connectors 110 can be equally flexed in any direction and to provide continuous and uniform support to both straight and curved portions of a bodily conduit.

[0022] Alternate connectors 110 at front and rear ends 104 and 106, respectively, of a segment 102 preferably have links 112 wound in clockwise and counter clockwise directions. Alternately winding connectors 110 ensures that the rotational displacement of links 112 and adjacent segments 102 relative to the walls of a blood vessel and more importantly the balloon of its delivery system is minimized when stent 100 is expanded.

[0023] It is particular feature that connectors 110 have a generally cylindrical configuration when stent 100 is relaxed as best seen in Figure 2a and a differentially stretched and compressed curved configuration when stent 100 is flexed as best seen in Figure 2b. The flexed configuration is brought about by two relatively opposing displacements of links 112. First, the differential stretching of connectors 110 occurs at the convex portion thereof denoted 114 by links 112 being displaced away from one another. Second, the differential compressing of connectors 110 occurs at the concave portion thereof denoted 116 by links 112 being displaced towards one another.

[0024] Stent 100 has a constricted diameter for delivery through a curved bodily conduit as shown in Figures 2a and 2b and an expanded diameter as shown in Figure 2c for supporting a bodily conduit. Stent 100 is preferably fabricated from low memory, more plastic than elastic, bio-compatible material, for example, stainless steel 316L, gold, tantalum, etc. which enables it to be plastically deformed from its constricted diameter to its expanded diameter. The constricted and expanded diameters of stent 100 typically fall in the ranges of 1.0-3.5 mm and 3.5-10.0 mm, respectively.

[0025] With reference now to Figures 2d-2f, stent 100 is shown overlying a balloon 118 forming part of its catheter delivery system 120. Stent 100 is mounted on its catheter delivery system 120 in its constricted diameter state shown in Figure 2e for plastic deformation through inflation of balloon 118 to its expanded diameter shown in Figure 2f for supporting the walls of a bodily conduit. An exemplary stent for implantation in a human coronary artery, is typically 15 mm long made up of five 2.2 mm long segments 102 connected by four 1 mm long connectors 110 and capable of flexion such that its ends subtend a 90° angle at a radius of curvature of approximately 9 mm.

[0026] The delivery of articulated stent 100 is considerably simpler than the delivery of prior art articulated

stent 10 because stent 100 is equally flexible in all direction and therefore does not require a dedicated angular orientation to pass a particular curved portion. This advantage is particularly important for delivery through blood vessels having multiple curved portions. It is a further advantage of stent 100 over prior art stents 10, that stent 100 provides continuous and uniform support along the entire length of a blood vessel by means of segments 102 and unflexed connectors 110 supporting straight portions thereof while connector portions 114 and 116 supporting convex and concave curved portions thereof, respectively.

[0027] With reference now to Figures 3a and 3b, an articulated stent 122 is shown in which connectors 124 comprise links 126 having one or more kinks 128. The design of connectors 124 is preferred to that of connector 110 because stent 100 may have a tendency to rupture balloon 118 due to two reasons. First, links 112 overlying the convex portion of balloon 118 have a tendency to be biased inward when stent 100 is flexed. Second, segments 102 display a rotational displacement relative to balloon 118 when stent 100 is expanded.

[0028] In this case, the differentially stretched and compressed curved configuration of connector 124 is brought about by two relatively opposing displacements of links 126 as before except that the differential stretching of connectors 124 at convex portion 114 occurs by kinks 128 being somewhat straightened out while the differential compressing of connectors 124 at concave portion 116 occurs by kinks 128 being more acutely bent.

[0029] In a similar fashion to stent 100, stent 122 has a constricted diameter for delivery through a curved bodily conduit as shown in Figures 3a and 3b and an expanded diameter as shown in Figure 3c for supporting a bodily conduit when implanted therein.

[0030] While the invention has been described with respect to one embodiment, it will be appreciated that many variations, modifications and other applications of the invention may be made.

Claims

1. An articulated stent (122), comprising:

at least two adjacent segments (102),
at least one flexible connector (124) connecting said at least two adjacent segments, wherein each flexible connector comprises a plurality of flexible links (126),

characterized in that

each of said flexible links comprises one or more kinks (128).

2. An articulated stent (122) according to claim 1,

characterized in that said adjacent segments (102) are substantially rigid segments having a plurality of connected cells each having apices, wherein, upon expansion, each of said rigid segments presents a substantially cylindrical diamond mesh.

3. An articulated stent (122) according to claim 2, characterized in that each of said flexible links (126) connects apices of adjacent cells on adjacent rigid segments (102).
4. An articulated stent (122) according to claim 3, characterized in that said plurality of links (126) includes between 8-24 links.
5. An articulated stent according to one of claims 1 to 4, characterized in that the stent is made from biocompatible material capable of a more plastic than elastic deformation.
6. An articulated stent according to claim 5, characterized in that said material is stainless steel.
7. An articulated stent according to claim 5, characterized in that said material is gold.
8. An articulated stent according to claim 5, characterized in that said material is tantalum.

Patentansprüche

1. Ein gegliederter Stent (122), umfassend:

wenigstens zwei angrenzende Segmente, (102)

wenigstens ein flexibler Verbinder (124), der die wenigstens zwei angrenzenden Segmente verbindet, wobei jeder flexibler Verbinder eine Vielzahl von flexiblen Bindegliedern (126) umfasst,

dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass jedes der flexiblen Bindeglieder eine oder mehrere Knickstellen (128) umfasst.

2. Ein gegliederter Stent (122) gemäß Anspruch 1, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** die angrenzenden Segmente (102) im Wesentlichen steife Segmente sind mit einer Vielzahl von verbundenen Zellen, von denen jede Spitzen aufweist, wobei jedes der steifen Segmente nach Expansion ein im Wesentlichen zylindrisches Diamantennetzwerk darstellt.
3. Ein gegliederter Stent (122) gemäß Anspruch 2, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** jedes der flexiblen Bindeglieder (126) zwei Spitzen von angrenzenden Zellen an angrenzenden steifen Segmenten (102)

verbindet.

4. Ein gegliederter Stent (122) gemäß Anspruch 3, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** die Vielzahl von Bindegliedern (126) zwischen 8-24 Bindegliedern beinhaltet. 5
5. Ein gegliederter Stent gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 4, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** der Stent hergestellt ist aus biokompatibles Material, das in der Lage ist zu einer eher plastischen als einer elastischen Deformation. 10
6. Ein gegliederter Stent gemäß Anspruch 5, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das Material rostfreier Stahl ist. 15
7. Ein gegliederter Stent gemäß Anspruch 5, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das Material Gold ist. 20
8. Ein gegliederter Stent gemäß Anspruch 5, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das Material Tantal ist.

Revendications

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1. Un stent articulé (122), comprenant :
 - au moins deux segments adjacents (102),
 - au moins un connecteur flexible (124) reliant lesdits au moins deux segments adjacents, où chaque connecteur flexible comporte une pluralité de liaisons flexibles (126),
 caractérisé en ce que
 - chacune desdites liaisons flexibles comprend un ou plusieurs coudes (128).
 30
2. Un stent articulé (122) selon la revendication 1, **caractérisé en ce que** lesdits segments adjacents (102) sont des segments substantiellement rigides possédant une pluralité de cellules reliées possédant chacune des sommets, où, à la dilatation, chacun desdits segments rigides présente une maille en losange substantiellement cylindrique. 40 45
3. Un stent articulé (122) selon la revendication 2, **caractérisé en ce que** chacune desdites liaisons flexibles (126) relie des sommets de cellules adjacentes sur des segments rigides (102). 50
4. Un stent articulé (122) selon la revendication 3, **caractérisé en ce que** ladite pluralité de liaisons (126) comprend entre 8 et 24 liaisons. 55
5. Un stent articulé selon l'une des revendications 1 à 4, **caractérisé en ce que** le stent est formé de matériau biocompatible capable d'une déformation

plus plastique qu'élastique.

6. Un stent articulé selon la revendication 5, **caractérisé en ce que** ledit matériau est l'acier inoxydable.
7. Un stent articulé selon la revendication 5, **caractérisé en ce que** ledit matériau est l'or.
8. Un stent articulé selon la revendication 5, **caractérisé en ce que** ledit matériau est le tantale.

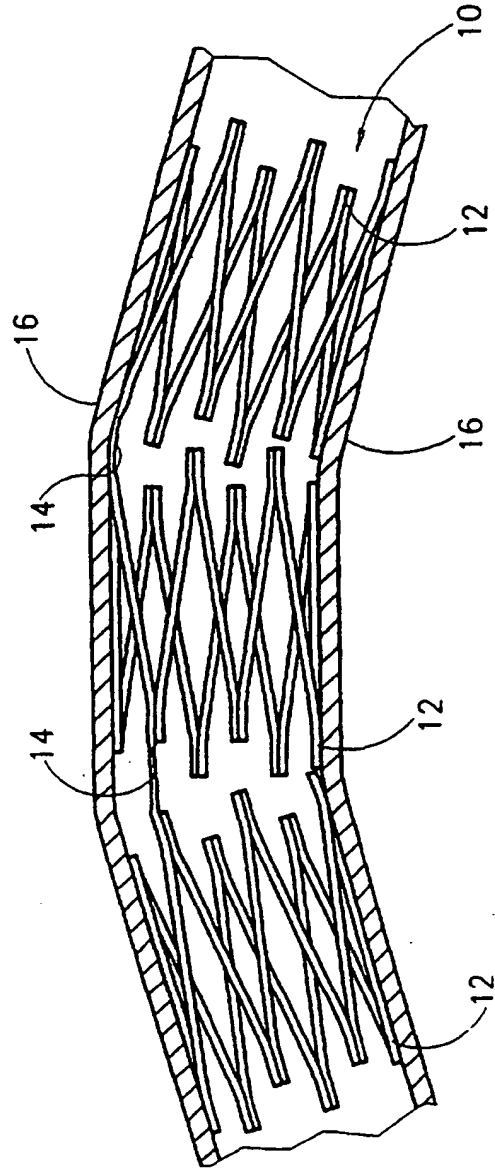


FIG.2A

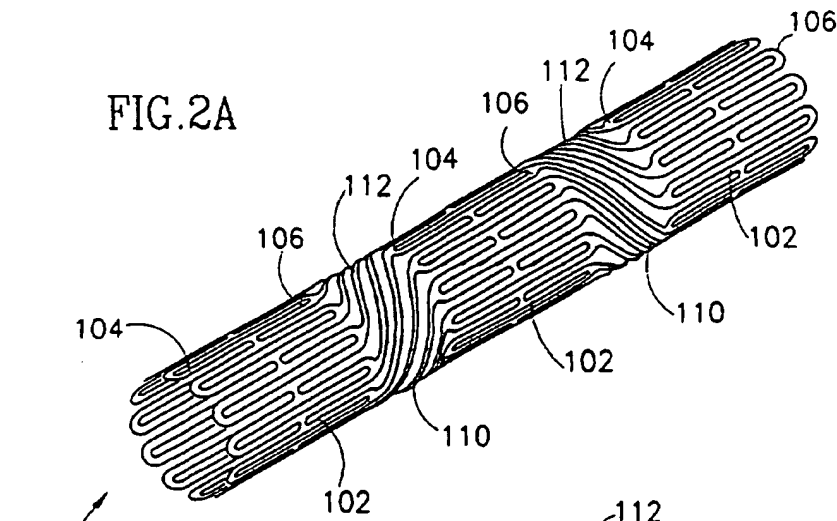


FIG.2B

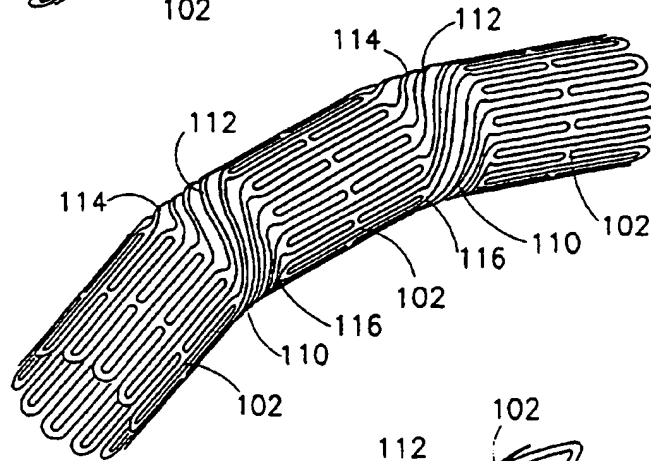
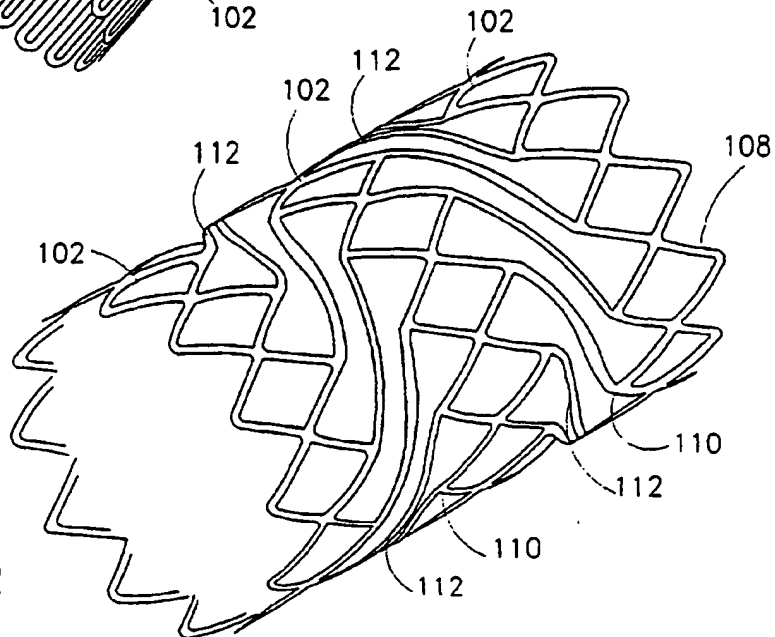
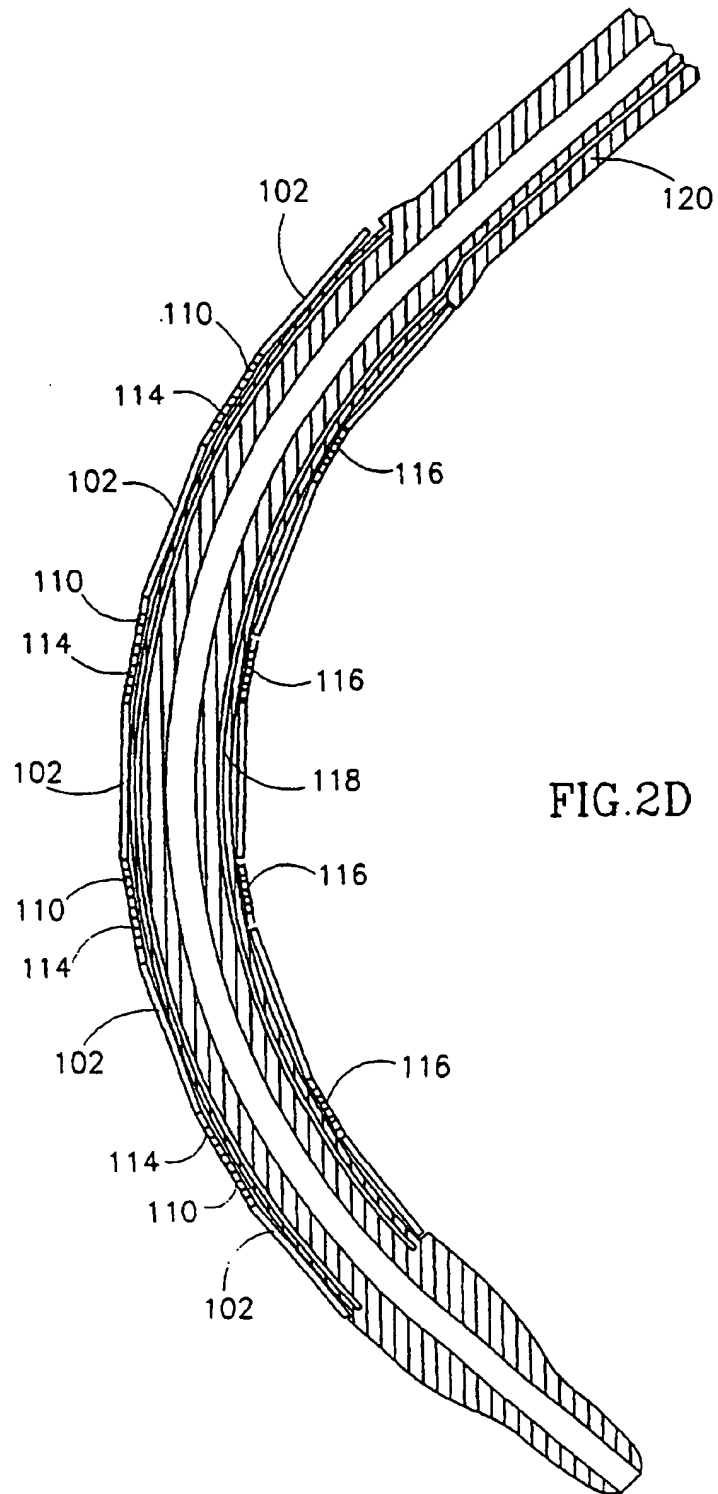


FIG.2C





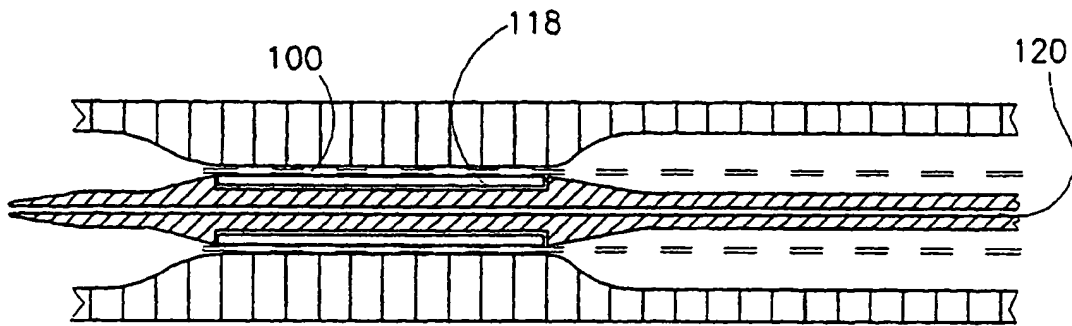


FIG. 2E

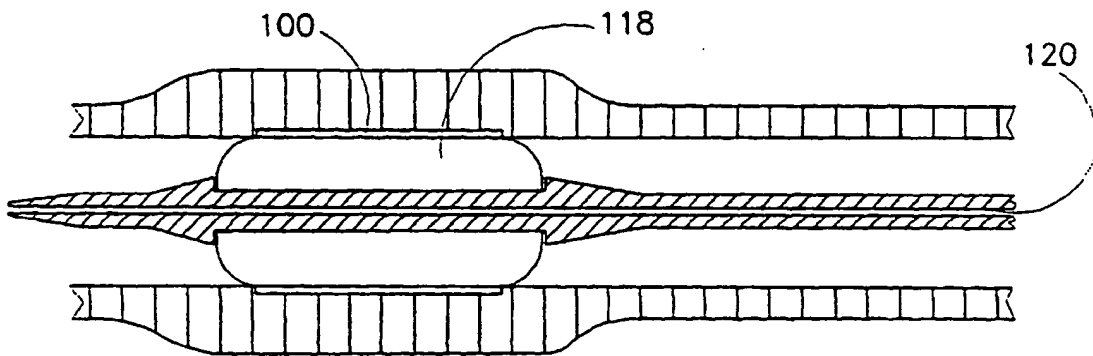


FIG. 2F

FIG.3A

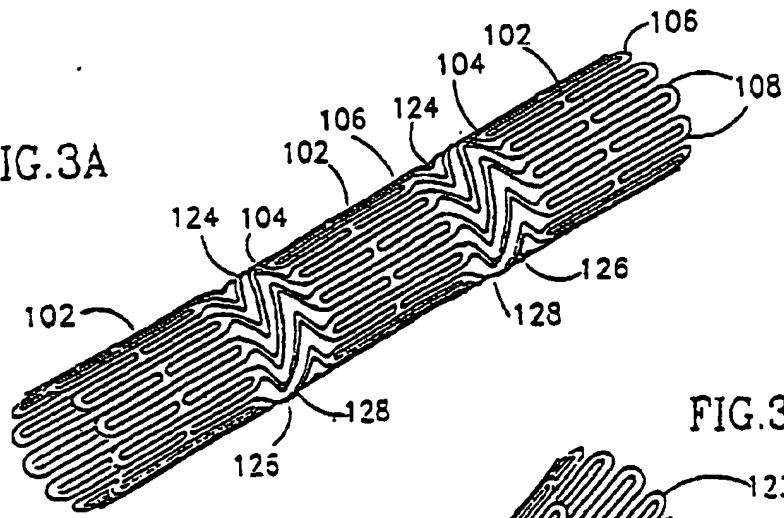


FIG.3B

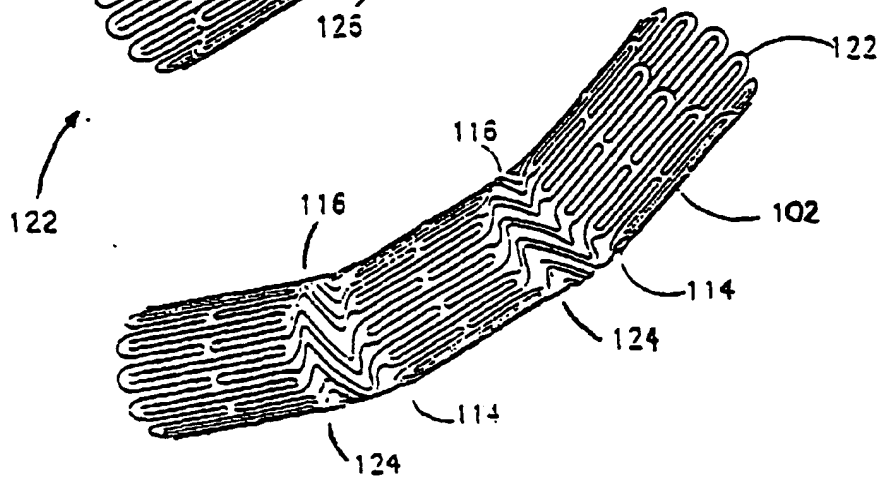


FIG.3C

